

# **Theses on the Fundamental Tasks of the Comintern Second Congress**

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# **Theses on Fundamental Tasks of the Second Congress of the Communist International<sup>1</sup>**

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1. — The present stage in the development of the international communist movement is marked by the fact that the finest representatives of the revolutionary proletariat in all capitalist countries have fully grasped the fundamental principles of the Communist International, viz., dictatorship of the proletariat and Soviet power, and have ranged themselves with unbounded enthusiasm on the side of the Communist International. An even bigger and more important step forward is the definite sympathy with these fundamental principles that has everywhere taken shape among the broadest masses; not only of the urban proletariat, but of the advanced section of the rural workers as well.

On the other hand, two errors, or failings, are to be observed in the very rapidly growing international communist movement. One, which is very grave and constitutes an immense and immediate danger to the success of the cause of proletarian emancipation, is that a section of the old leaders and of the old parties of the Second International—some yielding half-unconsciously to the wishes and pressure of the masses, and some deliberately deceiving the masses in order to retain their

function of agents and assistants of the bourgeoisie within the working-class movement—declare their qualified or even unqualified adherence to the Third International, while actually remaining in all their practical party and political work, on the level of the Second International. Such a state of affairs is absolutely intolerable, because it leads to downright corruption of the masses, detracts from the Third International's prestige, and threatens a repetition of the same acts of treachery as were perpetrated by the Hungarian Social-Democrats, who so hastily assumed the title of Communists. The other error, which is far less significant and is more in the nature of growing pains of the movement, consists in a tendency towards "Leftism" which results in a wrong appraisal of the role and the tasks of the party with regard to the class and the masses, and a wrong attitude towards the revolutionary Communists' obligation to work in bourgeois parliaments and reactionary trade unions.

Communists are in duty bound, not to gloss over shortcomings in their movement, but to criticise them openly so as to remedy them the more speedily and radically. For this purpose it is necessary: first, to define as concretely as possible, particularly on the basis of the practical experience already acquired, the content of the concepts "dictatorship of the proletariat" and "Soviet power"; second, to specify the precise content of the immediate and systematic preparatory work to be carried on in all countries so as to give effect to these slogans; and third, to specify the methods and means of rectifying the faults in our movement.

I

## **The Essence of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat and of Soviet Power**

2.—The victory of socialism (as the first stage of communism) over capitalism requires that the proletariat, as the only really revolutionary class, shall accomplish the following three tasks. First—overthrow the exploiters, and first and foremost the bourgeoisie, as their principal economic and political representative; utterly rout them; crush their resistance; absolutely preclude any attempt on their part to restore the yoke of capital and wage-slavery. Second—win over and bring under the leadership of the Communist Party, the revolutionary vanguard of the proletariat, not only the entire proletariat, or its vast majority, but all who labour and are exploited by capital; educate, organise, train and discipline them in the actual course of a supremely bold and ruthlessly firm struggle against the exploiters; wrest this vast majority of the population in all the capitalist countries from dependence on the bourgeoisie; imbue it, through its own practical experience, with confidence in the leading role of the proletariat and of its revolutionary vanguard. Third—neutralise, or render harmless, the inevitable vacillation between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, between bourgeois democracy and Soviet power, to be seen in the class of petty proprietors in agriculture, industry and commerce—a class which is still fairly numerous in nearly all advanced countries, although comprising only a minority of the population—as well as in the stratum of intellectuals, salary earners, etc., which corresponds to this class.

The first and second tasks are independent ones, each requiring its own special methods of action with regard to the exploiters and to the exploited respectively. The third task follows from the first two, and merely requires a skillful, timely and flexible combination of methods of the first and second type, depending on the specific circumstances in each separate instance of vacillation.

3.—In the concrete situation created throughout the world, and above all in the most advanced, powerful, enlightened and free capitalist countries, by militarism, imperialism, the oppression of colonies and weak countries, the world wide imperialist butchery and the “Peace” of Versailles—in that situation the very idea of the capitalists peacefully submitting to the will of the majority of the exploited, the very idea of a peaceful, reformist transition to socialism, is not merely sheer philistine stupidity but also down right deception of the workers, embellishment of capitalist wage-slavery, and concealment of the truth. That truth consists in the bourgeoisie, even the most enlightened and democratic, no longer hesitating at any fraud or crime, even the massacre of millions of workers and peasants, so as to preserve private ownership of the means of production. Only the forcible overthrow of the bourgeoisie, the confiscation of its property, the destruction of the entire bourgeois state apparatus from top to bottom—parliamentary, judicial, military, bureaucratic, administrative, municipal, etc.—right down to the wholesale deportation or internment of the most dangerous and stubborn exploiters and the institution of strict surveillance over them so as to foil their inevitable attempts to resist and to restore capitalist slavery—only

such measures can ensure real submission of the whole class of exploiters.

On the other hand, the idea, common among the old parties and the old leaders of the Second International, that the majority of the exploited toilers can achieve complete clarity of socialist consciousness and firm socialist convictions and character under capitalist slavery, under the yoke of the bourgeoisie (which assumes an infinite variety of forms that become more subtle and at the same time more brutal and ruthless the higher the cultural level in a given capitalist country) is also idealisation of capitalism and of bourgeois democracy, as well as deception of the workers. In fact, it is only after the vanguard of the proletariat, supported by the whole or the majority of this, the only revolutionary class, overthrows the exploiters, suppresses them, emancipates the exploited from their state of slavery and-immediately improves their conditions of life at the expense of the expropriated capitalists—it is only after this, and only in the actual process of an acute class struggle, that the masses of the toilers and exploited can be educated, trained and organised around the proletariat under whose influence and guidance, they can get rid of the selfishness, disunity, vices and weaknesses engendered by private property; only then will they be converted into a free union of free workers.

4.—Victory over capitalism calls for proper relations between the leading (Communist) party, the revolutionary class (the proletariat) and the masses, i.e., the entire body of the toilers and the exploited. Only the Communist Party, if it is really the vanguard of the revolutionary class, if it really comprises all the finest representatives of that class, if it

consists of fully conscious and staunch Communists who have been educated and steeled by the experience of a persistent revolutionary struggle, and if it has succeeded in linking itself inseparably with the whole life of its class and, through it, with the whole mass of the exploited, and in completely winning the confidence of this class and this mass—only such a party is capable of leading the proletariat in a final, most ruthless and decisive struggle against all the forces of capitalism. On the other hand, it is only under the leadership of such a party that the proletariat is capable of displaying the full might of its revolutionary onslaught, and of overcoming the inevitable apathy and occasional resistance of that small minority, the labour aristocracy, who have been corrupted by capitalism, the old trade union and co-operative leaders, etc.—only then will it be capable of displaying its full might, which, because of the very economic structure of capitalist society, is infinitely greater than its proportion of the population. Finally, it is only after they have been really emancipated from the yoke of the bourgeoisie and of the bourgeois machinery of state, only after they have found an opportunity of organising in their Soviets in a really free way (free from the exploiters), that the masses, i.e., the toilers and exploited as a body, can display, for the first time in history, all the initiative and energy of tens of millions of people who have been crushed by capitalism. Only when the Soviets have become the sole state apparatus is it really possible to ensure the participation, in the work of administration, of the entire mass of the exploited, who, even under the most enlightened and freest bourgeois democracy, have always actually been excluded 99 percent from participation in the work of administration. It is only in the Soviets that the



exploited masses really begin to learn—not in books, but from their own practical experience—the work of socialist construction, of creating a new social discipline and a free union of free workers.

II

## **What Immediate and Universal Preparation for the Dictatorship of the Proletariat Should Consist of**

5.—The present stage in the development of the international communist movement is marked by the fact that in the vast majority of capitalist countries, the proletariat's preparations to effect its dictatorship have not been completed, and, in many cases, have not even been systematically begun. From this it does not, however, follow that the proletarian revolution is impossible in the immediate future; it is perfectly possible, since the entire economic and political situation is most inflammable and abounds in causes of a sudden flare-up; the other condition for revolution, apart from the proletariat's preparedness, viz., a general state of crisis in all the ruling and in all bourgeois parties, also exists. However, it does follow that the Communist Parties' current task consists not in accelerating the revolution, but in intensifying the preparation of the proletariat. On the other hand, the facts cited above from the history of many socialist parties make it incumbent on us to see that "recognition" of the dictatorship of the proletariat shall not remain a mere matter of words.

Hence, from the point of view of the international proletarian movement, it is the Communist parties' principal task at the present moment to unite the scattered Communist forces, to form a single Communist Party in every country (or to reinforce or renovate the already existing Party) in order to increase tenfold the work of preparing the proletariat for the conquest of political power

—political power, moreover, in the form of the dictatorship of the proletariat. The ordinary socialist work conducted by groups and parties which recognise the dictatorship of the proletariat has by no means undergone that fundamental reorganisation, that fundamental renovation, which is essential before this work can be considered communist work and adequate to the tasks to be accomplished on the eve of proletarian dictatorship.

6.—The proletariat's conquest of political power does not put a stop to its class struggle against the bourgeoisie; on the contrary, it renders that struggle most widespread, intense and ruthless. Owing to the extreme intensification of the struggle all groups, parties and leaders in the working-class movement who have fully or partly adopted the stand of reformism, of the "Centre", etc., inevitably side with the bourgeoisie or join the waverers, or else (what is the most dangerous of all) land in the ranks of the unreliable friends of the victorious proletariat. Hence, preparation for the dictatorship of the proletariat calls, not only for an intensification of the struggle against reformist and "Centrist" tendencies, but also for a change in the character of that struggle. The struggle cannot be restricted to explaining the erroneousness of these tendencies; it must unswervingly and ruthlessly expose any leader of the working-class movement who reveals such tendencies, for otherwise the proletariat cannot know who it will march with into the decisive struggle against the bourgeoisie. This struggle is such that at any moment it may—and actually does, as experience has shown—substitute criticism with weapons for the weapon of criticism. <sup>2</sup>Any inconsistency or weakness in exposing those who show themselves to be

reformists or “Centrists” means directly increasing the danger of the power of the proletariat being overthrown by the bourgeoisie, which tomorrow will utilise for the counter-revolution that which short-sighted people today see merely as “theoretical difference”.

7.—In particular, we must not restrict ourselves to the usual repudiation, in principle, of all collaboration between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, of all “collaborationism”. Under the dictatorship of the proletariat, which will never be able, at one stroke, to abolish private property completely, mere defence of “liberty” and “equality”, while private ownership of the means of production is preserved, turns into “collaboration” with the bourgeoisie, and undermines the rule of the working class. The dictatorship of the proletariat means that the state uses its whole machinery of power to uphold and perpetuate “no-liberty” for the exploiters to continue their oppression and exploitation, “inequality” between the owner of property (i.e., one who has appropriated for himself certain means of production created by social labour) and the non-owner. That which, prior to the victory of the proletariat, seems merely a theoretical difference on the question of “democracy” inevitably becomes, on the day following victory, a question that is settled by force of arms. Consequently, even preliminary work in preparing the masses to effect the dictatorship of the proletariat is impossible without a radical change in the entire character of the struggle against the “Centrists” and the “champions of democracy”.

8.—The dictatorship of the proletariat is the most determined and revolutionary form of the proletariat’s class struggle against the bourgeoisie. This struggle can be

successful only when the most revolutionary vanguard of the proletariat has the backing of the overwhelming majority of the proletariat. Hence, preparation for the dictatorship of the proletariat entails not only explanation of the bourgeois character of all reformism, of all defence of democracy, while private ownership of the means of production is preserved; it entails, not only exposure of such trends, which are in fact a defence of the bourgeoisie within the labour movement; it also calls for old leaders being replaced by Communists in proletarian organisations of absolutely every type—not only political, but also trade union, co-operative, educational, etc. The more complete, lengthy and firmly established the rule of bourgeois democracy has been in a given country, the more the bourgeoisie will have succeeded in securing the appointment to such leading posts of people whose minds have been moulded by it and imbued with its views and prejudices, and who have very often been directly or indirectly bought by it. These representatives of the labour aristocracy, bourgeoisified workers, should be ousted from all their posts a hundred times more sweepingly than hitherto, and replaced by workers—even by wholly inexperienced men, provided they are connected with the exploited masses and enjoy their confidence in the struggle against the exploiters. The dictatorship of the proletariat will require the appointment of such inexperienced workers to the most responsible posts in the state; otherwise the workers' government will be impotent and will not have the support of the masses.

9.—The dictatorship of the proletariat means that all toiling and exploited people, who have been disunited, deceived, intimidated, oppressed, downtrodden and crushed by the

capitalist class, come under the full leadership of the only class trained for that leadership by the whole history of capitalism. That is why the following is one of the methods whereby preparations for the dictatorship of the proletariat should be started everywhere and immediately:

In all organisations, unions and associations without exception, and first and foremost in proletarian organisations, but also in those of the non-proletarian toiling and exploited masses (political, trade union, military, co-operative, educational, sports, etc., etc.), groups or cells of Communists should be formed—preferably open groups, but underground groups as well, the latter being essential whenever there is reason to expect their suppression, or the arrest or banishment of their members on the part of the bourgeoisie; these cells, which are to be in close touch with one another and with the Party centre, should, by pooling their experience, carrying on work of agitation, propaganda and organisation, adapting themselves to absolutely every sphere of public life and to every variety and category of the toiling masses, systematically educate themselves, the Party, the class, and the masses by means of such diversified work.

In this connection, it is of the utmost importance that necessary distinctions between the methods of work should be evolved in practice: on the one hand, in relation to the “leaders”, or “responsible representatives”, who are very often hopelessly beset with petty-bourgeois and imperialist prejudices—such “leaders” must be ruthlessly exposed and expelled from the working-class movement—and, on the other hand, in relation to the masses, who, particularly after the imperialist holocaust, are for the most part inclined to listen to and accept the doctrine that the guidance from the

proletariat is essential, as the only way of escape from capitalist slavery. We must learn to approach the masses with particular patience and caution so as to be able to understand the distinctive features in the mentality of each stratum, calling, etc., of these masses.

10.—In particular, there is a group or cell of Communists that deserves exceptional attention and care from the Party, i.e., the parliamentary group of Party members, who are deputies to bourgeois representative institutions (primarily the national, but also local, municipal, etc., representative institutions). On the one hand, it is this tribune which is held in particular regard by large sections of the toiling masses, who are backward or imbued with petty-bourgeois prejudices; it is therefore imperative for Communists to utilise this tribune to conduct propaganda, agitation and organisational work and to explain to the masses why the dispersal of the bourgeois parliament by the national congress of Soviets was legitimate in Russia (and, at the proper time, will be legitimate in any country). On the other hand, the entire history of bourgeois democracy, particularly in the advanced countries, has converted the parliamentary rostrum into one of the principal, if not the principal, venues of unparalleled fraudulency, financial and political deception of the people, careerism, hypocrisy and oppression of the working people. The intense hatred of parliaments felt by the best representatives of the revolutionary proletariat is therefore quite justified. The Communist parties and all parties affiliated to the Third International—especially those which have not arisen by splitting away from the old parties and by waging a long and persistent struggle against them, but through the old parties



accepting (often nominally) the new stand—should therefore adopt a most strict attitude towards their parliamentary groups; the latter must be brought under the full control and direction of the Central Committees of the Parties; they must consist, in the main, of revolutionary workers; speeches by members of parliament should be carefully analysed in the Party press and at Party meetings, from a strictly communist standpoint; deputies should be sent to carry on agitational work among the masses; those who manifest Second International leanings should be expelled from the parliamentary groups, etc.

11.—One of the chief causes hampering the revolutionary working-class movement in the developed capitalist countries is the fact that because of their colonial possessions and the super-profits gained by finance capital, etc., the capitalists of these countries have been able to create a relatively larger and more stable labour aristocracy, a section which comprises a small minority of the working class. This minority enjoys better terms of employment and is most-imbued with a narrow-minded craft spirit and with petty-bourgeois and imperialist prejudices. It forms the real social pillar of the Second International, of the reformists and the “Centrists”; at present it might even be called the social mainstay of the bourgeoisie. No preparation of the proletariat for the overthrow of the bourgeoisie is possible, even in the preliminary sense, unless an immediate, systematic, extensive and open struggle is waged against this stratum, which, as experience has already fully shown, will no doubt provide the bourgeois White guards with many a recruit after the victory of the proletariat. All parties affiliated to the Third International must at all costs give

effect to the slogans: “Deeper into the thick of the masses”, “Closer links with the masses”—meaning by the masses all those who toil and are exploited by capital, particularly those who are least organised and educated, who are most oppressed and least amenable to organisation.

The proletariat becomes revolutionary only insofar as it does not restrict itself to the narrow framework of craft interests, only when in all matters and spheres of public life, it acts as the leader of all the toiling and exploited masses; it cannot achieve its dictatorship unless it is prepared and able to make the greatest sacrifices for the sake of victory over the bourgeoisie. In this respect, the experience of Russia is significant both in principle and in practice. The proletariat could not have achieved its dictatorship there, or won the universally acknowledged respect and confidence of all the toiling masses, had it not made the most sacrifices, or starved more than any other section of those masses at the most crucial moments of the onslaught, war and blockade effected by the world bourgeoisie.

In particular, the Communist Party and all advanced proletarians must give all-round and unstinted support especially to the spontaneous and mass strike movement, which, under the yoke of capital, is alone capable of really rousing, educating and organising the masses, of imbuing them with complete confidence in the leadership of the revolutionary proletariat. Without such preparation, no dictatorship of the proletariat is possible; those who are capable of publicly opposing strikes, such as Kautsky in Germany and Turati in Italy, cannot possibly be tolerated in the ranks of parties affiliated to the Third International. This applies even more, of course, to those trade union and parliamentary leaders who so often betray the workers by

using the experience of strikes to teach them reformism, and not revolution (for instance, in Britain and in France in recent years).

12.—In all countries, even in those that are freest, most “legal”, and most “peaceful” in the sense that the class struggle is least acute there, it is now absolutely indispensable for every Communist Party to systematically combine legal and illegal work, legal and illegal organisations. Notwithstanding their false and hypocritical declarations, the governments of even the most enlightened and freest of countries, where the bourgeois-democratic system is most “stable”, are already systematically and secretly drawing up blacklists of Communists and constantly violating their own constitutions so as to give secret or semi-secret encouragement to the white guards and to the murder of Communists in all countries, making secret preparations for the arrest of Communists, planting *agents provocateurs* among the Communists, etc., etc. Only a most reactionary philistine, no matter what cloak of fine “democratic” and pacifist phrases he may don, will deny this fact or the conclusion that of necessity follows from it viz., that all legal Communist parties must immediately form illegal organisations for the systematic conduct of illegal work and for complete preparations for the moment the bourgeoisie resorts to persecution. Illegal work is most necessary in the army, the navy and the police because, since the imperialist holocaust, governments the world over have begun to stand in dread of people’s armies which are open to the workers and peasants, and are secretly resorting to all kinds of methods to set up military units specially

recruited from the bourgeoisie and equipped with the most up-to-date weapons.

On the other hand, it is likewise necessary that, in all cases without exception, the parties should not restrict themselves to illegal work, but should conduct legal work as well, overcoming all obstacles, starting legal publications, and forming legal organisations under the most varied names, which should be frequently changed if necessary. This is being practised by the illegal Communist parties in Finland, Hungary, partly in Germany, Poland, Latvia, etc. It should be practised by the Industrial Workers of the World in the U.S.A. and by all Communist parties at present legal, should public prosecutors see fit to take proceedings against them on the grounds of resolutions adopted by Congresses of the Communist International, etc.

A combination of illegal and legal work is an absolute principle dictated, not only by all features of the present period, that of the eve of the proletarian dictatorship, but also by the necessity of proving to the bourgeoisie that there is not, nor can there be, any sphere of activity that cannot be won by the Communists; above all, it is dictated by the fact that broad strata of the proletariat and even broader strata of the non-proletarian toiling and exploited masses still exist everywhere, who continue to believe in bourgeois-democratic legality and whom we must undeceive without fail.

13.—In particular, the conditions of the working-class press in most advanced capitalist countries strikingly reveal the utter fraudulency of liberty and equality under bourgeois democracy, as well as the necessity of systematically combining legal work with illegal work. Both in vanquished

Germany and in victorious America, the entire power of the bourgeoisie's machinery of state and all the machinations of the financial magnates are employed to deprive the workers of their press, these including legal proceedings, the arrest (or murder by hired assassins) of editors, denial of mailing privileges, the cutting off of paper supplies, and so on and so forth. Besides, the news services essential to daily newspapers are run by bourgeois telegraph agencies, while advertisements, without which a large newspaper cannot pay its way, depend on the "good will" of the capitalists. To sum up: through skulduggery and the pressure of capital and the bourgeois state, the bourgeoisie is depriving the revolutionary proletariat of its press.

To combat this, the Communist parties must create a new type of periodical press for mass distribution among the workers: first, legal publications, which, without calling themselves communist and without publicising their links with the Party, must learn to make use of any legal opportunity, however slight, just as the Bolsheviks did under the tsar, after 1905; secondly, illegal leaflets, even the briefest and published at irregular intervals, but reprinted at numerous printshops by workers (secretly, or, if the movement has become strong enough, by the revolutionary seizure of printshops), and providing the proletariat with outspoken revolutionary information and revolutionary slogans.

Preparations for the dictatorship of the proletariat is impossible without a revolutionary struggle, into which the masses are drawn, for the freedom of the communist press.

### III

#### **Rectification of the Political Line—Partly Also of the Composition—of Parties Affiliated or Desiring to Affiliate to the Communist International**

14.—The measure in which the proletariat in countries most important from the viewpoint of world economics and politics is prepared to establish its dictatorship can be seen with the greatest objectivity and precision in the fact that the most influential parties of the Second International, viz., the French Socialist Party, the Independent Social-Democratic Party of Germany, the Independent Labour Party of Great Britain and the Socialist Party of America,<sup>3</sup> have withdrawn from this yellow International, and have decided—the first three conditionally, the latter even unconditionally—to affiliate to the Third International. This proves that not only the vanguard of the revolutionary proletariat but its majority too have begun to come over to our side, convinced by the entire course of events. The main thing now is the ability to consummate this process and to consolidate firmly in point of organisation what has been achieved, so as to advance all along the line, without the slightest wavering.

15.—All the activities of the parties mentioned (to which should be added the Socialist Party of Switzerland,<sup>4</sup> if the telegraph reports of its decision to join the Third International are true) show—as any periodical of these parties will strikingly confirm—that they are not yet communist, and quite often run directly counter to the fundamental principles of the Third International, viz., the

recognition of the dictatorship of the proletariat and Soviet government in place of bourgeois democracy.

Accordingly, the Second Congress of the Communist International must resolve that it cannot immediately accept the affiliation of these parties; that it endorses the reply given by the Executive Committee of the Third International to the German “Independents”<sup>5</sup>; that it confirms its readiness to conduct negotiations with any party that withdraws from the Second International and desires to enter into closer relations with the Third International; that it will admit the delegates of such parties in a deliberative capacity to all its congresses and conferences; that it sets the following conditions for the complete adhesion of these (and similar), parties with the Communist International:

- 1) All decisions of all Congresses of the Communist International and of its Executive Committee to be published in all the periodicals of the parties concerned;
- 2) These decisions to be discussed at special meetings of all sections or local organisations of the parties;
- 3) After such discussion, special congresses of the parties to be convened to sum up the results, and for the purpose of—
- 4) Purging the parties of elements that continue to act in the spirit of the Second International;
- 5) All periodical publications of the parties to be placed under exclusively Communist editorship.

The Second Congress of the Third International should instruct its Executive Committee formally to accept these and similar parties into the Third International after ascertaining that all these conditions have actually been met and that the activities of the parties have assumed a communist character.

16.—As to the question of the conduct of Communists now holding a minority of the responsible posts in these and similar parties, the Second Congress of the Communist International should resolve that, in view of the obvious growth of sincere sympathy for communism among working men belonging to these parties, it would be undesirable for Communists to resign from the latter, as long as they can carry on work within them for the recognition of the dictatorship of the proletariat and Soviet government, and as long as it is possible to criticise the opportunists and Centrists who still remain in these parties.

At the same time, the Second Congress of the Third International should declare in favour of Communist groups and organisations, or groups and organisations sympathising with communism, joining the Labour Party in Great Britain, despite its membership in the Second International. As long as this party ensures its affiliated organisations their present freedom of criticism and freedom to carry on work of propaganda, agitation and organisation in favour of the dictatorship of the proletariat and Soviet government, and as long as this party preserves the character of a federation of all trade union organisations of the working class, it is imperative for Communists to do everything and to make certain compromises in order to be able to exercise their influence on the broadest masses of



the workers, to expose their opportunist leaders from a higher tribune, that is in fuller view of the masses, and to hasten the transfer of political power from the direct representatives of the bourgeoisie to the “labour lieutenants of the capitalist class”, so that the masses may be more quickly weaned away from their last illusions on this score.

17.—Concerning the Socialist Party of Italy, the Second Congress of the Third International considers that the criticism of that party and the practical proposals submitted to the National Council of the Socialist Party of Italy in the name of the party’s Turin section,<sup>6</sup> as set forth in *L’Ordine Nuovo* of May 8, 1920, are in the main correct and are fully in keeping with the fundamental principles of the Third International.

Accordingly, the Second Congress of the Third International requests the Socialist Party of Italy to convene a special congress to discuss these proposals and also all the decisions of the two Congresses of the Communist International for the purpose of rectifying the party’s line and of purging it, particularly its parliamentary group, of non-Communist elements.

18.—The Second Congress of the Third International considers erroneous the views on the Party’s relation to the class and to the masses, and the view that it is not obligatory for Communist parties to participate in bourgeois parliaments and in reactionary trade unions. These views have been refuted in detail in special decisions of the present Congress, and advocated most fully by the Communist Workers’ Party of Germany, and partly by the Communist Party of Switzerland<sup>7</sup>, by *Kommunismus*, organ of the East-European Secretariat of the Communist

International in Vienna, by the now dissolved secretariat in Amsterdam, by several Dutch comrades, by several Communist organisations in Great Britain, as, for example, the Workers' Socialist Federation, etc., and also by the Industrial Workers of the World in the U.S.A. and the Shop Stewards' Committees in Great Britain, etc.

Nevertheless, the Second Congress of the Third International considers it possible and desirable that those of the above-mentioned organisations which have not yet officially affiliated to the Communist International should do so immediately; for in the present instance, particularly as regards the Industrial Workers of the World in the U.S.A. and Australia, as well as the Shop Stewards' Committees in Great Britain, we are dealing with a profoundly proletarian and mass movement, which in all essentials actually stands by the basic principles of the Communist International. The erroneous views held by these organisations regarding participation in bourgeois parliaments can be explained, not so much by the influence of elements coming from the bourgeoisie, who bring their essentially petty-bourgeois views into the movement—views such as anarchists often hold—as by the political inexperience of proletarians who are quite revolutionary and connected with the masses.

For this reason, the Second Congress of the Third International requests all Communist organisations and groups in the Anglo-Saxon countries, even if the Industrial Workers of the World and the Shop Stewards' Committees do not immediately affiliate to the Third International, to pursue a very friendly policy towards these organisations, to establish closer contacts with them and the masses that sympathise with them, and to explain to them in a friendly spirit—on the basis of the experience of all revolutions, and

particularly of the three Russian revolutions of the twentieth century—the erroneousess of their views as set forth above, and not to desist from further efforts to amalgamate with these organisations to form a single Communist party.

19.—In this connection, the Congress draws the attention of all comrades, particularly in the Latin and Anglo-Saxon countries, to the fact that, since the war, a profound ideological division has been taking place among anarchists all over the world regarding the attitude to be adopted towards the dictatorship of the proletariat and Soviet government. Moreover, a proper understanding of these principles is particularly to be seen among proletarian elements that have often been impelled towards anarchism by a perfectly legitimate hatred of the opportunism and reformism of the parties of the Second International. That understanding is growing the more widespread among them, the more familiar they become with the experience of Russia, Finland, Hungary, Latvia, Poland and Germany.

The Congress therefore considers it the duty of all Communists to do everything to help all proletarian mass elements to abandon anarchism and come over to the side of the Third International. The Congress points out that the measure in which genuinely Communist parties succeed in winning mass proletarian elements rather than intellectual, and petty-bourgeois elements away from anarchism, is a criterion of the success of those Parties.

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<sup>1</sup> This set of theses was drafted by Lenin and subsequently presented and adopted at the Second World Congress of the Comintern. See *Lenin Collected Works* Vol. 31, p. 184–201. All subsequent footnotes from the LCW edition.—Equals Publishing Editors

<sup>2</sup> Lenin is quoting from Marx's work "Zur Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie" (see Marx/Engels, *Werke*, Bd. 1, S. 385).

<sup>3</sup> The *American Socialist Party* was formed in July 1901 at a congress held in Indianapolis, as the result of a merger of groups that had broken away from the Socialist Workers' Party and the Social-Democratic Party of the U.S.A. Among the new party's organisers was Eugene Debs, a popular figure in the U.S. labour movement. The social composition of the party was not uniform, it contained native-born and immigrant workers, as well as small farmers and people of petty-bourgeois origin. The Centrist and the Right-wing opportunist leaders of the party (Victor Berger, Morris Hillquit and others) denied the necessity of the proletarian dictatorship, renounced revolutionary methods of struggle, and reduced all party activities to participation in election campaigns. During the First World War (1914-18) three trends appeared in the Socialist Party: the social-chauvinists, who supported the imperialist policy of the Administration, the Centrists, who opposed the imperialist war only in word, and the revolutionary minority, who took an internationalist stand and struggled against the war.

The Socialist Party's Left wing, headed by Charles Ruthenberg, William Foster, William Haywood and others, relying on the proletarian elements, waged a struggle against the party's opportunist leadership, for independent proletarian action and the formation of industrial trade unions based on the principles of the class struggle. In 1919 a split took place in the Socialist Party. The party's Left wing broke away, becoming the initiator and nucleus of the Communist Party of the U.S.A. At present the Socialist Party is a small sectarian organisation.

<sup>4</sup> The *Social-Democratic Party of Switzerland* (known as the Swiss Socialist Party) was formed in the seventies of the last century and affiliated to the First International. The party was re-formed in 1888. The opportunists were very influential in the party, and during the First World War took a social-chauvinist stand. In the autumn of 1916, the Party's Right wing broke away to form their own organisation. The majority, headed by Robert Grimm, took a Centrist, social-pacifist stand, while the Left wing of the party adhered to an internationalist stand. The Great October Socialist Revolution in Russia influenced and strengthened the Left wing which, in December 1920, broke away and joined the Communist Party of Switzerland in 1921 (see Note 69).

<sup>5</sup> "Draft (or the Theses) of the R.C.P.'s Reply to a Letter from the German Independent Social-Democratic Party" (see present edition, Vol. 30, pp. 337-44).

6 The Turin section accused the Italian Socialist Party with its conciliatory leadership, of failing to give a correct analysis of events, in the conditions of the revolutionary upsurge in Italy (1919-20) that had created the possibility of the seizure of political power by the proletariat, and of having failed to advance any slogan acceptable to the revolutionary masses, and expel the reformists from its ranks. The section made a number of practical proposals: the expulsion of the opportunists from the party; the formation of communist groups in each factory, in the trade unions, co-operatives, and army barracks, the setting-up of factory T.U. committees to organise control of production in industry and agriculture. The section demanded that work to prepare the working masses for the creation of Soviets should be begun at once.

7 In October 1918, part of the Social-Democrat Left wing united to form the Communist Party of Switzerland. It was not a big party at the time, being represented by two delegates at the Second Congress of the Comintern.

In December 1920, the Left wing of the Swiss Social-Democratic Party broke away from it, and raised the question of forming a strong section of the Communist International in Switzerland. At a congress held in Zurich in March 1921, attended by 28 delegates from the Communist Party and 145 delegates representing the former Left wing of the Social-Democratic Party, the two groups officially united to form a single Communist Party of Switzerland.